

WEST COUNTY TIMES

North Richmond: Leaders hail new facility to house formerly incarcerated mothers

By Robert Rogers
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NORTH RICHMOND -- Local leaders gathered Thursday for the groundbreaking on a project to restore a vacant house that will provide housing and supportive services for women returning from prison and their children.

The house, owned by Community Housing Development Corp., was formerly a Contra Costa County Housing Authority property. Once the restoration is completed, the four-bedroom home will house up to eight women and their young children who will receive social services, including case management, job training and life skills.

"We are blessed with the support from the county and our partners," Bishop Edwina Perez-Santiago, director of REACH Fellowship, said in a news release.

REACH Fellowship is the agency that will be expanding its services to provide programs to the house's residents.

"REACH is the only organization that we know of that provides re-entry services solely to women to help reunite them with their families and children," Perez-Santiago said.

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County Supervisor John Gioia, of Richmond, called the new facility part of the county's role as a "progressive leader for changing the way we help our formerly incarcerated residents and supporting their return to the community." Gioia is a leading proponent of social services to ease the implementation of AB109, which shifts the responsibility for incarcerating thousands of low-risk inmates from the state to counties.

A low-interest loan from the county's Neighborhood Stabilization Program helped fund the home's \$242,250 remodeling project, which is expected to be completed by the end of summer.

The vacant property is at 1724 Fred Jackson Way. The women will receive services such as case management and job training in order to reduce the chances they return to prison.

Among those on hand Thursday were county Sheriff David Livingston and Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin.

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